



August 20, 2010

Mr. Gary Clayton  
Concord Community Preservation Committee  
141 Keyes Road, First Floor  
Concord, MA 01742

Dear Mr. Clayton:

In keeping with Concord's historic legacy of commitment to social reform, local reformers once again have a historic opportunity to make a difference in your community. Through the dedicated efforts of The Drinking Gourd Project, Concord is embarking upon memorializing a significant chapter of local, state and national historic importance. Long known as the birthplace of the American Revolution, Concord is now committed to unearthing and telling the equally important story of the African American struggle for independence that occurred here—beginning with the revolutionary era, and of the nineteenth-century abolitionists, particularly women, who fomented their community's consciousness to the plight of enslaved people during the antebellum era.

In 1780, an African Revolutionary War Veteran, Caesar Robbins, built a home near the North Bridge after the historic Battle of Concord; the same year Massachusetts passed the Bill of Rights in 1780. More than five generations of Mr. Robbins's descendants lived in that home before it passed into the hands of white European descendants, and then the house was moved across town. Mr. Robbins's descendants were instrumental in creating a strong community in Concord; his daughter, Susan Garrison, hosted at least one Concord Female Anti-Slavery Society meeting in the 1830s, and in 1881, Peter Hutchinson, his son-in-law, was the first African American to register to vote in Concord.

Recently, Concord residents succeeded in saving this historic home from demolition. The Drinking Gourd Project is now committed to returning the building to its original location near the North Bridge, as well as to restoring, preserving, and adapting it into an educational center on African and abolitionist history, teaching at this historic site the centrality of defending civil liberties to the legacy of Concord, Massachusetts. As such, the Robbins House would be an added attraction to the thousands of annual visitors to the Minute Man National Historical Park.

There is no other house like this in Concord, built by an African in the eighteenth century, which tells the story of free, enslaved, and self-emancipated residents during this turbulent time in America's formative years. I strongly support the efforts of the Town of Concord and the Drinking Gourd Project to establish the Caesar Robbins House as an educational center and encourage you and the Committee to dedicate the necessary funding to return this critical reminder of our shared national heritage to its rightful place and status as an important educational center on African and Abolitionist History.

Thank you for giving this request your most careful consideration.

Sincerely,  
Sandra Harbert Petrulionis, Ph.D.  
Professor of English and American Studies